
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Climate Change** – Following the Climate Change Event held on 5th July, 2007 all Scrutiny Committees have held meetings to give consideration to actions for inclusion within the Darlington Borough Council Action Plan on Climate Change. On 6th December at a meeting of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee, together with Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all other Scrutiny Committees, the Action Points gathered by Scrutiny Committees were agreed and approved for inclusion in the Action Plan. The recommendations of the Group are to be considered by Cabinet in due course.
 - (b) **Work Programme 2007/08** – We have given consideration to the Work Programme of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2007/08 and in doing so examined Cabinet's Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern. We will continually add to our Work Programme and monitor ongoing items.
 - (c) **Draft Sustainable Community Strategy** – We have received a presentation on the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy, which is being led by Darlington Partnership and will provide the long-term vision for Darlington that all partners would be working to from April 2008. A new Local Area Agreement is also to be drawn up with Government to deliver the Strategy on a three to five year cycle. The Strategy now has two priorities and five clearly identified themes. Committee had a lively discussion and we hope our comments have been taken into consideration.
 - (d) **Residents Parking Schemes Around Darlington College** – On 1st February, 2007 a Task and Finish Review Group was established to investigate car parking issues on the Houghton Road area following the relocation of the College. Members concluded that as parking schemes were proposed for the area the Review Group take no further action but that the situation be monitored following implementation of the Schemes. We therefore received a progress report on the introduction of residents' parking schemes within Hundens Lane, Eastmount Road and Borough Road.

- (e) **Proposed 20mph Zones – Criteria** – At the meeting of Scrutiny held on 8th November Members requested information on the selection criteria used when prioritising the current programme of 20mph schemes. Many request for traffic calming are received each year and Officers gave a detailed account of the objectives and process used when determining areas to receive traffic calming measures.
- (f) **Street Lighting – White Light Conversion Programme** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny have been monitoring the White Light Conversion Programme since 2004 and at the last meeting of Scrutiny we were thrilled to learn that since implementation of the programme there have been 1372 upgrade installations that have achieved energy savings estimated at £19 per unit. Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the White Light Conversion Programme.
- (g) **Planning Function – Decision Performance** –We have agreed to undertake a review on planning application decision making speed performance levels aimed at identifying areas for improvement and proposing positive ways forward. I will report progress to future Council meetings.
- (a) **Street Furniture** – We again visited the issue of Street Furniture in and around the Town Centre and Members gave information on areas of concern which included overgrown hedgerows, poor condition of guardrails and their possible removal in certain areas and the need to regularly maintain the seats which had been installed on the High Row. A site meeting has been arranged between Councillors Ruck, Lewis and Hartley and officers in the Highways & Engineering Division to inspect the areas of concern on the 5 February 2008.

2. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the following meetings:-

- Various briefings with Officers.
- Governance Group
- Monitoring and Co-ordination Group
- The Tees Valley Environment Forum.

Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee